

The President's Daily Brief

Sensitive
19 July 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

19 July 1972

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cairo's semiofficial newspaper, al-Ahram, appears to be hedging on President Sadat's announcement that Soviet military personnel must leave Egypt. The Soviets have not yet reacted publicly to Sadat's announcement. (Page 1)

South Vietnamese troops inside Quang Tri City are edging closer to the Communist strongpoint in the citadel. (Page 3)

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EGYPT-USSR

Several hours after President Sadat publicly insisted that Soviet military personnel leave Egypt, the semiofficial Cairo daily al-Ahram appeared to be hedging on the extent of Cairo's demand. Al-Ahram said that Soviets engaged in training the Egyptian armed forces are not affected by the decision. Al-Ahram asserted that Egypt is eager for the provisions of the Egyptian-Soviet treaty of friendship and co-operation to remain in force.

In his speech yesterday before the Arab Socialist Union's Central Committee as summarized by the Egyptian news agency, however, Sadat announced he had made three important decisions. Sadat said that as of Monday he had terminated the services of Soviet military advisers and experts in the country and had replaced them with Egyptians. He had also ordered the Egyptian military to take over exclusive control of all installations and equipment established since the June 1967 war, apparently an allusion to important Soviet facilities in Alexandria, Mersa Matruh, and Aswan. Finally, Sadat said his actions were taken to facilitate consultations on a "new stage" in the Soviet-Egyptian relationship, although he insisted that he had no intention of altering basic cooperation between the two countries.

The theme of Sadat's speech--which followed that of a current series of articles by al-Ahram editor Muhammad Haykal--was that Egypt requires complete freedom of action in dealing with Israel. Sadat alluded to disagreements with Moscow on the supply and control of Soviet weapons and said he could not accept restrictions on Egypt's ability to make its own political decisions. He observed that Egypt had no desire to have "friendly advisers" fight Egypt's battle, and he implied that by taking over equipment and missions controlled by the Soviets he would free the Soviet Union from authority and responsibility for Egypt's future actions.

The number of Soviet military personnel currently in Egypt is estimated at about 13,000.

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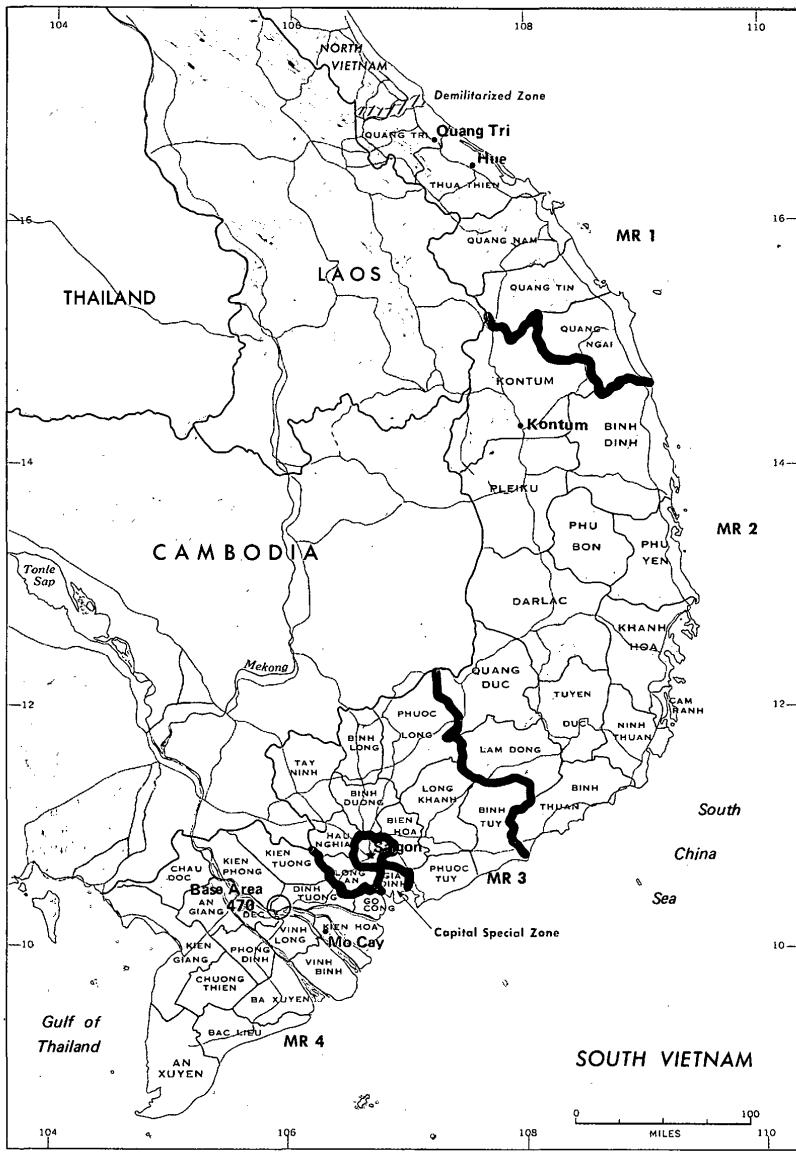
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The Soviets have become accustomed to Sadat's surprise moves, but these latest steps may have caught them off guard. The communiqué winding up Prime Minister Sidqi's recent visit to Moscow for example, carried no hint of the new direction that Sadat had chosen.

There has been no public reaction thus far from the Soviets, who may be waiting until they can be certain which forces must leave Egypt.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

South Vietnamese Airborne troops inside Quang Tri City are edging closer to the citadel, the Communist-held strongpoint in the city's northern section, but Communist resistance is stiff. On the city's northern outskirts, other airborne troops pushed back a tank-led enemy infantry force after an eight-hour battle early yesterday. Other government units, including airborne and marines to the east of the city, report continued enemy shelling but only light ground contact.

Scattered action has been reported elsewhere. Hue was again hit by rockets. In Kontum Province, Communist forces northwest of the provincial capital attacked a South Vietnamese Army patrol--their first such action in that area in two weeks.

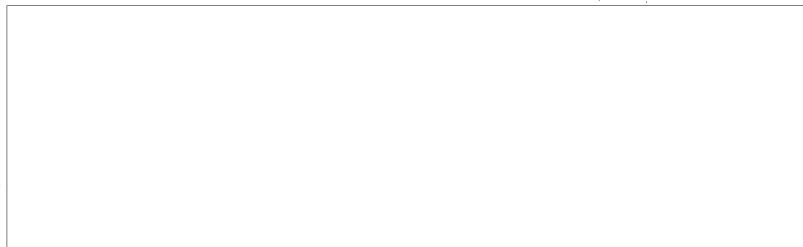
A prisoner has claimed that a North Vietnamese unit is tasked with holding back government units while other Communist forces complete their withdrawal from Kontum. We believe that the attacking forces were elements of this unit.

In the Mekong Delta, increased enemy activity continues in Kien Hoa Province. A government outpost just south of Mo Cay district town was destroyed by a mortar and ground attack. Farther west in the delta, an element of the North Vietnamese 32nd Regiment has been detected near the enemy Base Area 470 in western Dinh Tuong Province. The 32nd may have been brought in to aid other Communist forces that have been attempting to expand the base area and secure surrounding lines of communication.

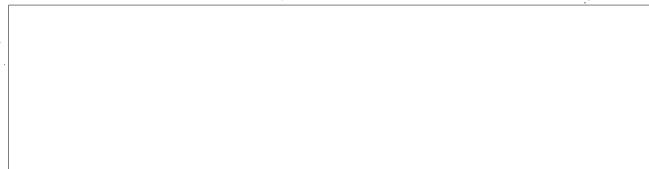
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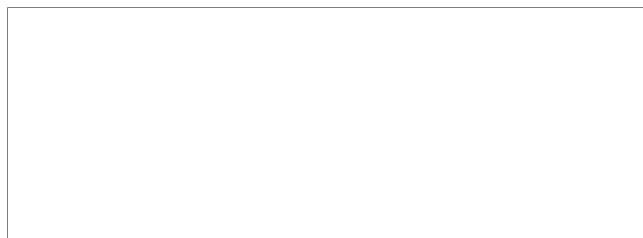
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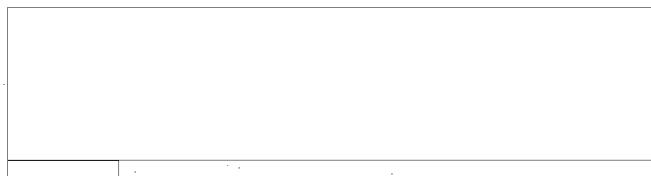
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NOTES

Romania: A national party conference, the second since Nicolae Ceausescu became party chief in 1965, opens today in Bucharest. We expect the conference to be a relatively low-keyed affair, with discussion focused on the economy and educational reform. As in the case of the last conference in 1967, we expect some high-level personnel shifts in party and state agencies but Ceausescu will remain in firm control.

China:

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